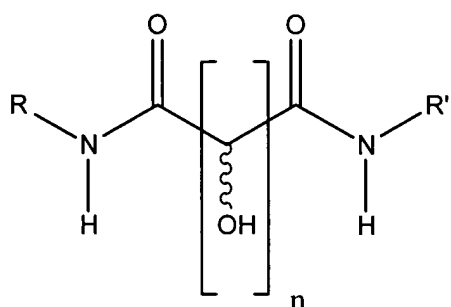


IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (canceled)

2. (currently amended) ~~The A~~ gelling agent or thickener ~~of claim 1~~ in the form of a N,N'-disubstituted aldaramide, a N,N'-disubstituted pentaramide, or a derivative thereof having the formula



wherein n is 3 or 4, and wherein R and R' represent the same or different substituents ~~chosen selected~~ from the group of substituted or unsubstituted, ~~branched, possibly aromatic groups containing, cyclic or linear alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl~~ groups having ~~from 1 up~~ to 40 carbon atoms.

3. (currently amended) The gelling agent or thickener of claim 2, wherein R and R' each ~~represent~~ are independently selected from the a linear, branched, or cyclic alkyl group of cycloalkyl groups having 4-20 carbon atoms.

4. (currently amended) The gelling agent or thickener of claim 3, wherein R and R' each are independently selected from cyclohexyl and cyclododecyl ~~the group of cycloalkyl groups~~ having 4-16 carbon atoms.

5. (previously presented) The gelling agent or thickener of claim 2, wherein R and R' are the same.

6. (currently amended) The gelling agent or thickener of claim ~~1~~ 2 being an N,N'-dicycloalkyl ~~deglucaramide~~ D-glucaramide.

7. (currently amended) A process for preparing a the gelling agent or thickener of claim 2, said process comprising:

oxidation of an aldose or pentose to form an aldaric or pentaric acid or a salt thereof, and
condensation of the aldaric or pentaric acid or ~~a~~ the salt thereof with a primary amine of the formula RNH_2 and a primary amine of the formula $R'NH_2$.

8. (original) The process of claim 7, wherein the aldaric or pentaric acid or salt thereof is activated before condensation by lactonization and/or esterification.

9. (original) The process of claim 7 wherein the aldose or pentose is selected from the group consisting of allose, altrose, glucose, mannose, gulose, idose, galactose, talose, ribose, arabinose, xylose, lyxose, and derivatives thereof.

10. (original) The process of claim 9, wherein the derivative is a deoxy aldose or pentose, an ether, or an ester.

11. (original) The process of claim 8 wherein the aldose or pentose is selected from the group consisting of allose, altrose, glucose, mannose, gulose, idose, galactose, talose, ribose, arabinose, xylose, lyxose, and derivatives thereof.

12. (original) The process of claim 11, wherein the derivative is a deoxy aldose or pentose, an ether, or an ester.

13. (currently amended) A process for preparing a gel or ~~thickening~~ thickened composition comprising:

mixing the gelling agent or thickener of claim ~~1~~ 2 with a composition, thus transforming the composition into a gel or thickened composition.

14. (original) The process of claim 13 wherein the composition comprises an organic solvent.

15. (original) The process of claim 14 wherein the solvent is selected from the group consisting of aromatic and non-aromatic hydrocarbons, alcohols, ethers, esters, aldehydes, alkanolic acids, epoxides, amines, halogenated hydrocarbons, silicon, vegetable oils, phosphoric esters, sulfoxides, water and mixtures thereof.

16. (previously presented) The process of claim 13 wherein the gelling agent or thickener is mixed with the composition in a ratio of between about 0.01 and about 50% by weight.

17. (original) The process of claim 15 wherein
the mixture of the gelling agent or thickener and the composition is heated, or
wherein a solution of the gelling agent or thickener is added to or sprayed into the composition.

18. (original) The process of claim 16 wherein the mixture of the gelling agent or thickener and the composition is heated, or wherein a solution of the gelling agent or thickener is added to or sprayed into the composition.

19. (currently amended) A gel comprising the gelling agent or thickener of claim ~~1~~ 2.

20. (previously presented) A gel produced by the process of claim 13.